



# Gap Analysis on EQAVET Adoption

## Summary Report



VET21001

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# 1 At the beginning

## 1.1 Context of the Gap Analyses

The **European Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)** was developed and published as a European Parliament and Council Recommendation in 2009. Evidence shows that Member States have made progress in the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation to varying degrees. Reasons for this seem to rely on several interrelated causes, one of which being its nature of high-level guidelines and the toolbox approach, from which organisations can choose what to implement.

The EQAVET methodology proposed by the framework is based on<sup>1</sup>:

- a cycle consisting of four phases (planning, implementation, assessment and review) described for VET providers/systems;
- quality criteria and indicative descriptors for each phase of the cycle;
- common indicators for assessing targets, methods, procedures and training results – some indicators are to be based on statistical data, others are of a qualitative nature.

An **ISO 21001 standard** became the first ISO management system standard for educational organisations. Its contents are specially tailored to fit the needs of the education sector at various levels and sub-sectors and to be compatible, to complement and to support the implementation of other frameworks. It comprehends all EQAVET indicative descriptors at VET provider level and provides more detailed requirements specifically targeted to improve educational organisations (including VET providers) processes, it could be used to further guide and improve the quality assurance at the VET provider level.

The project “**A standardised practical toolkit to implement the European Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Education and Training**” (**VET21001**) focuses on providing the market with solutions that will mitigate different issues in order to increase EQAVET adoption by VET and Higher VET (HVET) – VET provider level. In order to understand and address their needs in-depth, **a gap analyses regarding the EQAVET adoption** was prepared.

Gathered data will enable evidence-based decisions leading to the development of supporting actions to overcome identified difficulties, amongst which are the elements of a capacity-building programme - competence profile and curricula, an accredited certification scheme and a practical toolkit.

This document is an extract of the full report Gap Analysis on EQAVET Adoption, available at <https://vet21001.eu/>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:155:0001:0010:EN:PDF>

## 1.2 Aim of the Gap Analyses

The aim of Gap Analyses was **to identify the most relevant difficulties faced by implementers and evaluators as the end-users, while trying to understand and implement EQAVET and what demotivates them to adopt it.** The full report describes in detail the aim, description, planned activities and timeline of Gap Analyses as foreseen. It is followed by a detailed description of implemented activities and data analysis for each planned activity under Gap Analyses.

## 1.3 How the Gap Analyses was conducted

The project consortium performed Gap Analyses regarding the EQAVET adoption because such study was never done before, and data was needed to produce adequate and relevant supporting tools for VET providers.

The Gap Analyses envisaged two sub-activities to identify relevant, appropriate and precise data: desk research and a survey across pre-selected EU countries.

Through desk research, the consortium sought and analysed scientific articles and other relevant publications about the EQAVET adoption with a focus on:

- criteria interpretation,
- constructive criticism and
- problems encountered that blocked and/or demotivated EQAVET implementation.

The plan was to analyse a minimum of five publications per partner country and thus to understand low EQAVET adoption since 2009. After an overview, the consortium confirmed selected articles and proposed a standardised format to be used by all partners when performing the publications' analyses in order to facilitate the joint analyses of data.

Under the second sub-activity, the consortium created a survey to collect stakeholders' opinions regarding their interpretation of the EQAVET criteria and their known and/or envisioned challenges regarding EQAVET implementation and evaluation. Therefore, the survey was applied to two diverse groups of stakeholders (implementers, evaluators) to make sure the information collected covered both perspectives. Furthermore, the data also allowed the identification of competence profiles for a different type of users. Each partner country was responsible for identifying and inviting the stakeholders. In order to do so, a list of targeted respondents was developed in each country.

The project consortium also used the project website to publish the survey and invite additional stakeholders to participate at their will.

# 2 At the end

## 2.1 Results of the Gap Analyses

During **Desk research**, consortium collected 39 publications. The most represented is Portugal with 11 publications, followed by Slovenia (8 publications) and Italy (6 publications). Additional countries were included: Belgium, Austria, Estonia, the Netherlands, Sweden and Turkey.

Difficulties identified can be matched in four different categories: criteria interpretation, constructive criticism, problems encountered that blocked and/or demotivated EQAVET implementation and other difficulties.

### Joint difficulties felt by users

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#### Criteria interpretation

1. Challenge in matching EQAVET framework to national quality assurance measures
2. Diminishing standardisation due to the influence of different national contexts on EQAVET implementation
3. Lack of legal framework related to national quality assurance and quality system
4. Lack of clear, objective definition of quality criteria
5. Quality indicators used in the wrong context
6. Difficulty in preparing active measures related to EQAVET indicators for improving the quality of education
7. The nature of the indicator should imply the adequate evaluation period

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#### Constructive criticism

1. Lack of knowledge of EQAVET or information is not user-friendly
  2. Too many procedures for EQAVET implementation or not enough information provided or transparent
  3. Too many evaluation tools for EQAVET evaluation or not enough information provided or transparent
  4. Tools too complicated for EQAVET implementation
  5. Quality assurance measures need to be simple and flexible to cater for variances
  6. Quality assurance measures need to be developmental
  7. Quality assurance measures need to apply to formal VET, adult formal learning, WBL and the validation of informal and informal learning
  8. Embedded quality assurance planning cycle of EQAVET (PDCA cycle)
  9. Enhancing quality culture in VET provider institution, decision-making on existing policies and QA systems
  10. Creation of a shared culture of QA and improvement
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### Joint difficulties felt by users

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11. Lack of engaged stakeholders in QA and innovation in VET, improving existing relationships with stakeholders
  12. Misuse of EQAVET as a tool for financial funding
  13. Too much focus on results/outputs of quality assurance measures, rather than on input
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### Problems encountered

1. Lack of systematic staff training
  2. The low value of quality promotion
  3. How to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives in QA systems
  4. Difficulties in adopting new internal procedures
  5. Lack of staff involved (low number of staff involved)
  6. Inadequate management of QA tasks
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### Other

1. Lack of funding for implementation and evaluation procedures
2. Low focus on principles of quality
3. The strong dichotomy between the objective of preparing for Labour Market and for further education, creating tensions and uncertainties that make it difficult to trace a real mission for this type of education
4. Unclear adaptation of 10 EQAVET indicators to soft/entrepreneurial skills
5. Missing research data on a national level(s)

The **European Survey** results were tested with several researched methods. In the preliminary phase, consortium analysed data according to specific respondents' role. In the next phase, the joint data was analysed and decided to use it in further analyses in order to better understand and validate results.

The analyses display that the respondents strongly believe that:

- the indicative descriptors are clear;
- it is easy to implement/evaluate the indicative descriptors;
- the indicative descriptors are relevant
- and they have the capabilities to implement/evaluate the indicative descriptors.

In addition, the analyses also display:

- The least clear indicative descriptor for the respondents is "*Early warning systems are implemented.*" However, even for that indicative descriptor data shows that 70,2 % of the respondents agree and 13,1 % of respondents strongly agree that the indicative descriptor is clear. All the other indicative descriptors are even clearer to the respondents.
- The indicative descriptor "*Resources are appropriately internally aligned/ assigned with a view to achieving the targets set in the implementation plans*" is the hardest to implement/evaluate for the respondents. However, we see that more than half (65,8 %) of the respondents agree or strongly agree that the indicative descriptor is easy to

implement/evaluate. Respondents assess all the other indicative descriptors as even easier to implement/evaluate.

- According to the respondents, the least relevant indicative descriptor is "*Providers plan cooperative initiatives with other VET providers*". Yet, 94,7 % of the respondents still agree/strongly agree that the indicative descriptor is relevant. It can be concluded that for every indicative descriptor, almost 95 % of the respondents believe that the indicative descriptor is important.
- The respondents feel they have the least the capability when implementing/evaluating the indicative descriptor "*Early warning systems are implemented*". Once again, the vast majority (86,9 %) of the respondents believe they actually have the capability to implement/evaluate the indicative descriptor. To conclude: for every indicative descriptor, more than 85 % of the respondents believe they the capability to implement/evaluate it.

Furthermore, the consortium also tested statistically significant differences. The analysis confirms whether or not there is a statistically significant difference in answers between implementers and evaluators. Consortium discerned statistical signification for two indicative descriptors:

- The indicative descriptor "There is early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development." is clearer for the implementers compared to the evaluators.
- The indicative descriptor "The relevant stakeholders participate in the process of analysing local needs." is more relevant for the evaluators compared to the implementers.

Nevertheless, the additional – qualitative – answers gave more in-depth information that supported findings from desk research and was integrated into **Joint conclusions of the Gap Analyses**.

## 2.2 Joint conclusions of the Gap Analyses

Merging identified information from desk research and the European survey, Gap Analyses clearly confirms the following difficulties:

- **Lack of clearly defined, relevant and objective definition of quality criteria and indicators.**
- **Lack of engaged stakeholders** in QA and innovation in VET, improving existing relationships with stakeholders.
- **Inadequate management of QA tasks** (lack of time or bad time management, low priority is given, monitoring issues).





### **About the VET21001 Project and this publication**

The VET21001 project aims to develop a capacity building program, an accredited certification scheme and an implementation toolkit to motivate a wider EQAVET adoption. The VET21001 toolkit will use a standardized approach based on the recently published ISO 21001:2018, capitalizing on its already internationally consensually approved content and expecting that, by associating the ISO brand to EQAVET, all players in the market, including those of the standardization, accreditation and certification worlds, will become more curious about it, as well as willing to contribute to its dissemination and assuring its sustainability.



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